

**Special  
Issue!**

# WORKCAMPS

FALL 2005

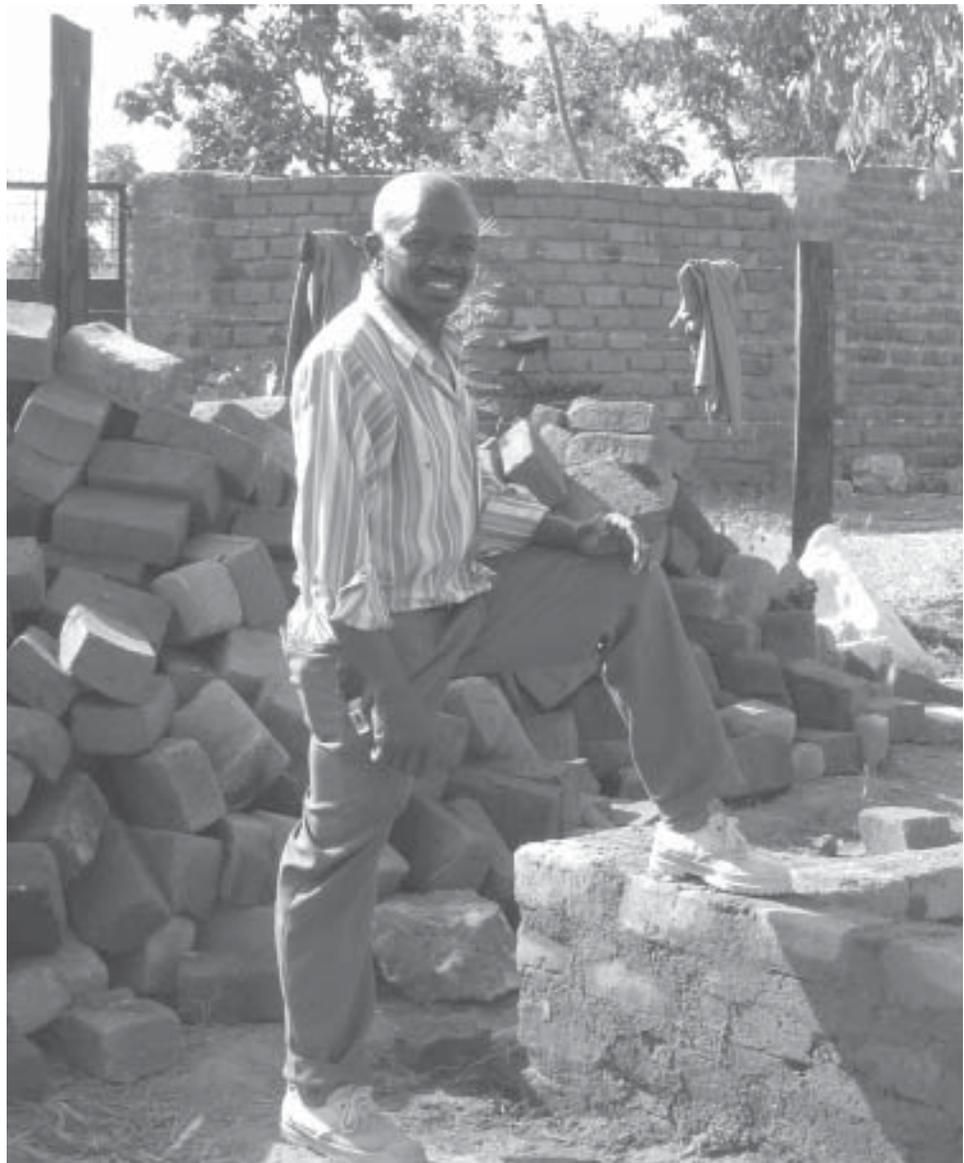
Burundi

Congo

Kenya

Rwanda

Uganda



**A**frican Great Lakes Initiative  
of the Friends Peace Teams



### **African Great Lakes Initiative Friends Peace Teams**

The African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) of the Friends Peace Teams strengthens, supports, and promotes peace activities at the grassroots level in the Great Lakes region of Africa (Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda). To this end, AGLI responds to requests from local religious and non-governmental organizations that focus on conflict management, peace building, trauma healing, and reconciliation. AGLI sponsors Peace Teams composed of members from local partners and the international community.

For further information about AGLI, please contact David Zarembka at:

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Or visit AGLI's website at  
[www.aglionline.org](http://www.aglionline.org).

### **Editorial Comment**

*Going on a four week camp is in some ways an out of this world experience. I have been in a totally different place and have had 24/7 experiences of life with a group of people a month ago I had never met. I came in a new place totally different from my home but in 4 weeks it has become in some ways like a home and the people like another family.*

Anna Crumley-Effinger,  
Rwanda workcamp

This issue of the AGLI Progress Report is emphasizing our summer 2005 workcamps. This year AGLI sponsored four workcamps—(1) the third year at Bududa with the Evangelical Friends for Peace, Community Development, and Child Care building a technical school for orphans, (2) the third year with Burundi Yearly Meeting and the Kibimba Peace Committee, building three classrooms for the new Nyarurambi School and roofing five homes destroyed in fighting, (3) the second year with Rwanda Yearly Meeting in building classrooms for their street children/orphans program, and (4) the first year with Friends for Peace and Community Development in Kakamega building an AVP Peace Center. Three were 19 workcampers from the United States and two from Canada. Fifteen of these 19 were female and only 4 were male (!) with ages from 16 to 79. With a grant from the Right Sharing of World Resources these workcampers were joined by 6 African from another country—for example, a Rwanda went to the Kenyan workcamp and a Kenyan to the Rwanda workcamp.

The summer also included two AVP programs—one introducing AVP in Bukavu, South Kivu, Congo. The other worked with the already established AVP program in Kakamega, Kenya.

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## Workcamps for 2006

AGLI will be sponsoring five workcamps; one each in Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, and Congo. The dates are June 23 to July 29, 2006. For more information and an application contact AGLI's Program Coordinator at [dawn@aglionline.org](mailto:dawn@aglionline.org).

## Quaking in My Seat: Obtaining an US Visa

By Barbara Wzybar

After our summer workcamp in 2004 in Bududa, Uganda, several of the workcampers from Germantown (PA) Meeting had invited my two dear African friends Hellen Kabuni and Teresa Walumoli to come to Philadelphia to become better acquainted with Quakers here and to help us raise more funds for the Children of Hope orphans' project. We worked hard on this endeavor and planned a busy schedule for them, only to find that the American Embassy in Kampala had denied them visas twice, having taken the required \$100 per person fee each time. Stunned and disconsolate, we rallied our local politicians to support us. Their staffs were as helpful as they could be. With the help of Joseph MacNeal in Allyson Schwarz's office, Mary Faustino in Rick Santorum's office, advice from Ilona Grover in Chaka Fattah's office, and emails from Arlen Specter's office, we did get a response from the visa officer in Kampala. He quoted section 214 B of the immigration law and made no apologies for requiring all applicants to demonstrate to his satisfaction enough ties to the homeland that they would return to Uganda.

Inwardly, I raged at this decision and felt it was so unfair and, in a word, racist. These women earned \$60 a month as schoolteachers, which was not considered enough of a tie to the homeland. The many children they would be leaving behind did not seem to be taken into account. My Quaker Meeting wrote letters and I sent emails. Then I decided on a very personal approach.

Just before I was to return to Uganda this summer, I sent a passionate email to the visa officer and asked to see him when I arrived in Kampala on July 6<sup>th</sup>. I picked up his return email in Addis Ababa on July 5<sup>th</sup>. He would see me.

I arrived at the American Embassy in Kampala, feeling some distaste for this institution that had dealt such a blow to two such worthy and innocent Africans. It was a bit scary: armed guards, bulletproof glass, high walls, locked gates, electronic screening, lockers for

cameras. When I was through all that, I was sent to another section of the Embassy with more armed guards and more bulletproof glass. I was embarrassed that my being an American resulted in my getting special treatment.

In the end I did see the visa officer, and he left me with very little hope that my friends would ever be admitted, despite the intervention of all four politicians' offices and a letter of support from my Quaker Meeting of 400 strong, as well as a letter from the AGLI coordinator. It did not matter that between them they had nineteen children (including orphans) to return to, or that, unlike most of the population, they had jobs. The fact that they were property owners was dismissed on the grounds that they were probably small four room houses of little value. Equally, he took no interest in their personal bank accounts. In the end, I asked, "What can we do to prove to you that these women will return?" As if to give me the tiniest shred of hope, he said that perhaps if they can convince a visa officer of their devotion to the project, they might be allowed a visa. That was it. I left.

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On July 20<sup>th</sup>, I returned to Kampala and the Embassy with Hellen and Teresa. It was a six hour journey by bus. We stayed overnight in Kampala, in order to be at the Embassy at 6:45 A.M. on July 21<sup>st</sup>. A few days before this visit, I had traveled to the nearest big town, Mbale, to email the visa officer, explaining in detail our project and why these women should be granted visas. My North American workcamp team made suggestions to improve the email and were as supportive as they could be.

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At 6:45 A.M. there was already a line of about fifty well dressed but nervous Ugandans outside the Embassy. The armed guards were there, but otherwise the Embassy was closed. At about 7:25 A.M., the visa officer arrived, got out of his car before driving through the iron gates, and hurriedly stated that he would be seeing only forty-five applicants, and no second-time applicants. There was a collective gasp from the line. I peeled off from the line and started the whole security rigmarole again: bullet proof glass, scanners, confiscated camera, etc. Hellen and Teresa lost their place in the line.

Eventually I got up to the next building and—thanks to being an American—saw the visa officer. Again he was dismissive. “Why should I see these women again? What new do they have to report?” I answered that I thought we could prove devotion to the cause, the worthy project and I gave details. He agreed to see them.

I returned to the line with my African friends. Once again we were told we would not be admitted because they had their quota of forty-five. Once again I broke out of the line and pleaded for Hellen and Teresa. The personnel were always polite and helpful. They phoned through to the visa officer and after a short space to time, Hellen and Teresa were allowed back in the line.

So we paid the non-refundable \$100 for each woman and played the waiting game—from 6:45 A.M. until 2:30 P.M. with no food, only water. Hellen and Teresa were dreadfully frightened. They read their Bibles. I tried to reassure them, but they remained very quiet. As the hours passed, I began to get a bit nervous myself. I sat in the waiting room and watched and

listened as each applicant was called to be interviewed. Almost all of them were denied visas. I could sense what each of them must be feeling. For a Ugandan to put up \$100, be denied a visa, and lose the money to the American Embassy must be a terrible blow.

At 1:00 P.M. it was almost our turn. We were Nos. 41 and 42. The visa officer, after finishing with No. 38, drew the blinds and went to lunch. We sat and idled out water, which Hellen and Teresa declined to drink. They sat quietly and with great dignity and continued to read their Bibles.

At 1:45 P.M. the visa officer returned and saw two others before it was Hellen’s turn. Hellen hardly had a voice, she was so nervous. She showed the bank statements for the project. That seemed to make him sit up and take notice. He asked difficult questions. Finally, he asked something that Hellen did not seem to be answering. I was quaking in my seat. The dear compassionate armed Ugandan guard who was stationed near the door, but between Hellen and me, silently indicated that I ought to go to the window and support Hellen. I hopped over to the guard to ask him if that would not be detrimental to her case. He pushed me over to the window. I found my nerve and spoke for Hellen. The questions continued, and, in the end, a visa was granted! The visa officer told me that my name would be on the visas and that if they did not return, I would be held responsible. Inwardly, I grinned. I should have thanked him, but at that point I just couldn’t bring myself to do it. To me, the whole process had been unnecessary from the start. I did understand that he was just a functionary, trying to do a job under difficult circumstances. Teresa got her visa and we left the Embassy.

We returned to our lovely village of Bududa late that night. As we sat in the mutatu [the public bus/taxi] that would take us out of the chaos of Kampala, I asked Teresa how she was feeling. She said in her clipped Ugandan accent, with a big sweeping smile on her face, “I am perfect.” Then I asked Hellen how she was feeling and she said, “I am the same.” I looked out on the vibrant African scene of the Taxi Park in Kampala and wondered what these women will think of North America when they arrived in October.

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When the search button comes up, type in “AGLI” and then click on “Join this group.”

# Rwanda

## Awash with Friendship

By Anna K. Crumley-Effinger

The kitchen area at the Kagarama Friends Church guest house in was a caged off area in the back of the building. From the first day I arrived in Rwanda it incited so much curiosity in me. Kitchens are one of my favorite places because often they are centers of conversation and the creation of delicious dishes. I was so interested in this place where all the staff congregated and I could hear them talking, laughing and working. Kitchens are always the first place I want to go in a house and being in a new setting where I knew cooking was not happening over an electric burner and in an oven, I was even more eager to explore this new place.

For four weeks, three meals a day we were fed by Julienne Uwimana, a young, slender, tall woman who would wake us up each morning lightly tapping at our door saying in a singing voice, “Your breakfast is ready.” We would go to the big room with its long wooden tables, white walls of concrete, and a smooth concrete floor. The windows had yellow and green curtains and the panes would be swung open to let in the air and morning sun. The tables were often arranged in a big square with benches along the sides, but everything could be easily moved to accommodate meetings of church leaders, circles of benches for AVP workshops, or in rows for classes to face the painted-on black board at the end of the room. Our food was always neatly arranged on a table against a wall near the door to a small room with a sink, refrigerator, and a table lined with dishes. Our food was always in

white covered tin dishes with pink flower bouquets painted on the side and a big silver spoon to dish out rice, potatoes, beef in red sauce, green boiled manioc leaves, beans and carrots or some other delicious dish. At lunch time glass bottled Fantas [orange soda] stood at the end of the table and there was always some sort of fruit, pineapple, banana or Asian plums to complete the meal. Julienne would be floating around refilling dishes or disappearing to the back area. As we finished she would pick up our dishes and carry them to the side room. I had been duly warned by a workcamper from last year that she had never been allowed to help cook or clean. But I knew I would have to find someway because endless thank yous and attempts to stack plates so they would be easier for Julienne to clear and carry was not going to satisfy me.

On the second day I found my entrance. After lunch one of the American workcampers brought out a Frisbee and went to the garden in front to begin to throw it around. Eventually other workcampers and some of the staff joined in. All of us were around the same age in our 20s and playing this game that was new to most of them felt fun and natural. Although Kinyarwanda, English, French and Swahili were all being used, language can not be too much of a barrier in a “keep-away” Frisbee game. It was early afternoon and the sun was pretty hot. After a while some refreshment was needed. I went to the outside door

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Continued from page 6: Awash with Friendship

of the side room and asked Julienne for some water and cups, promising to help wash them later which she sort of laughed off. She pulled cool water from the freezer of the refrigerator. The water was stored in a large yellow jerry can after being boiled. Somehow it was cold despite being in a place that couldn't possibly be consistently cold because of power being on and off for hours each day. The water was refreshing and cool and after I collected everyone's cups I headed into the side room. I set them with all the piles of our dirty dishes from lunch and announced I was there to help wash them. Julienne again laughed, probably not sure what to make of this new person asking to scrub sticky food dishes. But after a number of reiterations of my wish in English, French, and with hand gestures, she began to fill large colored plastic bins 20 inch diameters with water. They were sitting on the floor and a plastic tube from the spout slowly put water into them. Julienne added handfuls of blue powered soap that foamed a bit and made the water slimy and blue. She set a stool on the floor and I started to wash. She instructed me as to what should go first and there we sat washing and rinsing for an hour. We talked of our families, of singing, and of a few words in Kinyarwanda which she was helping to teach me, like *koze-* to wash. It was great to spend time with this young woman about whom I was so curious—she too was probably interested in me. When we had finished, a new friendship had begun. I was sore after leaning down and washing for an hour and had a new appreciation for everyone who was helping to provide for us because a lot of dishes must have been produced from three meals a day.

My relationship with Julienne grew throughout my time in Rwanda. We played cards and word games with the group. The Americans were stunned by her beautiful outfits in church and at weddings. We loved listening to her laugh and sing. We loved playing with her beautiful baby, Peace. On my last morning in Rwanda, I helped Julienne wash the dishes for the last time—a time full of singing and tears. After a month I had grown to love her and many others very much. It was difficult to think of leaving our new shared lives. I feel so grateful for our friendships and our dish washing time. I even had the privilege to see the fenced off kitchen area.

## Visit by Laura Bush

By Anna Crumley-Effinger

On Thursday, July 14, 2005 Laura Bush visited Rwanda. One of her stops was George Fox Secondary School at Kicukiro Friends Church where the AGLI workcampers were staying this summer. In the days leading up to the visit by Madame President Bush, there were dozens of workers fixing walkways, building flower pots, repainting areas, trimming trees, taking down fences. At first we were annoyed that they were doing all of this expensive work for a visitor, feeling like she should see this place as it really is with its imperfections. Then we were annoyed that money that could be spent for more students' school fees or to fix a classroom, was being used to impress Laura Bush. Later we found out the money was separately funded for the beautifying project which made us feel a little bit better.

Nonetheless, it was hard walking around on the day of the visit and seeing the road to the school. Water, which is in short supply in this dry season, and for which most people have to travel to the town water pumps and carry it back to their houses, was being used to sprinkle the ground so that there would be less dust when Laura Bush and her daughter were driven up in the expensive SUVs, needed for the bumpy roads. Usually this road it is teeming: full of people carrying huge bags of cement or flour on the backs of their bikes; balancing five gallon water cans on their heads; motorbike taxis with people paying for a ride up the hill; and children in school uniforms scurrying to the side of the red road to get out of the way of fast speeding buses and the clouds of dust they leave in their wake. In contrast, we saw the cleared streets in anticipation of Laura Bush's visit. It was not the real Kicukiro road she would see. It felt as if reality was being glossed over to hide what life in that area looked like from a leader from the Western world. It seemed like a show was being put on to make the place look cleaner and more orderly than the confused energy and movement I had grown to appreciate and understand more deeply. I clean up my house when I have guests come over, but this in some way bordered on deception and untruth.

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Let me introduce the international work team. We were seven North Americans (five Americans including Barbara, Karen, Walt, Kaki and Sam) and two Canadians (Sheila and me). We were well flanked by John from Congo and Nestor from Burundi. This delegation of nine was partnered with Ugandans who friends volunteered on the project with us. I like to refer to the Ugandan team as “the Apostles” since to my surprise almost everyone was named for an apostle or person from the Bible. There was John, Peter, Paul, Simon, Joseph, and then many of the remaining lead males from the Bible like Moses and Samuel plus Patrick, Robert and Charles. (For some reason I had assumed my new Ugandan friends would go by their African names.) Our local team also included some impressive women whose strength rivaled that of the men. There were two youth pastors Robert and Godfrey who volunteered at the worksite and provided invaluable help translating from English to Lugisu and back again. The final members of our work team were our incredible, generous hosts Simon and Evelyn, Hellen, and George and Teresa and all their families. Loading soil, stones, cement and building in the hot equatorial sun would not have been possible for any of us were it not for the comfortable, loving homes we returned to every evening.

What does a workcamp entail? The obvious answer is manual work. But there is more. There is camaraderie, cultural exchange, moral and medical support. When the truckload of bricks are two hours late, building friendship and understanding become a part of the foundation that holds this school together. Don't get me wrong, there was work. It was building at its most basic. Concrete, for example, does not arrive in a big mixing truck with a lovely spout to direct the mixture exactly where you want it. Unmixed concrete arrives in three separate truck loads. We shovel out each of the truck loads of soil, stones and cement bags. This is all shoveled again into our one wheelbarrow and hauled up the wobbly wooden ramp to the second floor for use. Each wheelbarrow load takes one person to push and three to pull it up the ramp. Water? There is no hose or tap. Water means using a large plastic container and filling it in the pond or stream and hauling it up to the second floor. Then

comes the mixing – again manually with a team of two or three turning over the mixture. After all this manual mixing of the concrete the team moves into formation to pass it in trays the size of dinner plates up the wood ladder to the site leader who pours it into the frame around the iron girders. It is a long and arduous process but we are outside having fun, laughing and talking.

Between Frisbee sessions with the local children and visits to the medical clinic for malaria treatment of Ugandans, we did, in fact, prime and paint three of the four main floor classrooms and the main hallway. The necessary walls and reinforced beams were completed on the second floor. And finally the view on our drive home included an almost-complete shiny new roof on the school. There remains much work to be done before the vocational school opens but progress was made and many plan to return next year. While my arms and legs are much stronger as a result of workcamp it is my heart that got the best workout.

### **The Good Samaritan Is Still Among Us** *By Walt Burwell*

My arrival with fellow workcampers in Uganda on July 6th, 2005 at Entebbe Airport was met with a grand welcome by our host Pastor George Walumoli. This was my first visit to Africa and, as an African American, I saw this as an educational and cultural experience. As a volunteer in a new environment, you hope your time and efforts will make a difference and that your contributions may have an impact on the organization's mission and also may have an influence in areas you never considered. The latter is what I saw unfold over the period of my stay in Bududa.

Throughout our stay, the workcamp team saw a number of illnesses and accidents to Ugandan children and adults. Malaria is a recurring illness that is most challenging to adults and children because it comes from the bite of a mosquito and can not be prevented. At the site several volunteers and their children had a bout with this illness. Medical treatment could be obtained from the village clinic. When team members

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# Burundi



## Wazungu Jokes

By Anna Sandidge

In overcoming myths about *Wazungu*, [foreigners, white people] Parker, Alyn and I developed a few *Wazungu* jokes:

How many *Wazungu* does it take to walk down a road? Zero. *Wazungus* don't walk!

How many *Wazungu* does it take to carry a tree? Zero. *Wazungus* don't carry trees.

How much cassava bread can one *Wazungu* eat? None. *Wazungus* don't eat cassava.

How much water can a *Wazungu* carry? None. *Wazungus* don't carry water.

How many *Wazungu* fit in the back of a truck? Zero. *Wazungus* don't ride in the backs of trucks.

You get the gist and we had a lot of fun trying to convince the Burundians that while there are many differences between us, we are more the same than we are different. It was fun to challenge their stereotypes of us and in the process learn more of each other.

I think our biggest impact in challenging *Wazungu* stereotyping was when we went to Gitega. As we walked through the market the first time in Gitega we were met with people yelling "*Wazungu*" at us trying to get our attention. If we were close enough to recognize the person yelling at us we would smile really big, wave and say back "Burundi!" like we were happy to see them. This was met with rounds of laughter and we did this every time someone shouted "*Wazungu*" at us. On our last visit in Gitega, people in the market no longer shouted "*Wazungu*" at us instead they yelled "Burundi!" It felt like a small victory of being a part of the community and not just "*Wazungu*".

## Nyarurambi Workcamp

By Anna Sandidge

As I sat on the plane for seventeen hours I rehashed all the excitement, myths and reservations I've held over the past few months while preparing for this adventure in Africa. I was going to Burundi so I watched news alerts, with whispers of violence – a grenade blast in Kamenge, some shootings claimed by the rebel group up-country, the cease-fire broken. Even though peace agreements were signed and the first round of democratic elections had occurred with minimal violence, shootings in only in a few provinces, I knew we were going into a country that was still technically at war. What does it mean for a Quaker to enter service in a war zone? What will I do if I encounter violence? Little concerns for my comfort crept into consciousness, where will we sleep, what will the food be like? Will I get sick? Will I get malaria? Will the Burundian people I'm working with like me? What will our Ugandan team member be like? Can I really live and work peacefully with three other Americans and a Ugandan? All of these weighed heavy on my heart as I waited for Burundi to appear in the plane window.

When I stepped into the beauty of Burundi and was lovingly greeted by the Friends, I was embarrassed by my fears and grateful for the immediate connection

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“When I stepped into the beauty of Burundi and was lovingly greeted by the Friends, I was embarrassed by my fears and grateful for the immediate connection of coming home to Friends, no matter where you are in the world.”

Continued from page 10: Nyarurambi Workcamp

of coming home to Friends, no matter where you are in the world. We were introduced to Burundi a little at a time, a visit to the hippos at Lake Tanganyika, where we heard rumors about a legendary crocodile named Gustav who has walked through many wars and across many countries. We shoved through the throng of the marketplace and attended a football (soccer) match. It was fun and exciting and felt incredibly indulgent but was a great experience.

David, Parker, Alyn, Jerry and I arrived in Kibimba, our home for the next three weeks, on a Sunday morning an hour late for church services. We were quickly ushered to the front of the church and seated next to the pastor in places of honor. This is all very confusing for a silent Friend who sits in circled pews. Women draped in cloths of brilliant colors dance as the choirs sing and drums beat rhythmically, sending praises of thanks up to God. My senses are overwhelmed as I reconcile my notions of worship with African Evangelical Friends. Then Elie Nahimana, our workcamp host and legal representative for Burundi Yearly Meeting, rose to the podium and spoke in Kirundi, a beautiful language. I get lost in its rhythm and song. Then the entire congregation's eyes were on us and Elie whispered, "Anna, you must make a speech now." My consciousness jerked to attention and I tentatively stood, making the introductions of our team to the church. We are met with open stares



Women working on the new Nyarurambi School

of curiosity and giggles from the crowd. The church service wanes into 2 hours of singing and sharing and prayer and preaching.

We lived in Kibimba and worked about four kilometers (three miles) away in Nyarurambi, a *colline* or hill community where another Friends church resides and is the home of the new school we have built. For the first three days of the workcamp we attended an Alternatives to Violence (AVP) workshop with community members who would be working with us. It was one of the single most important experiences of my life. AVP is a transforming workshop that, not only opened doors to a deeper friendship but gave me glimpses of understanding of those who have lived through war and many deaths of beloved spouses, children, friends and family for more than ten years. This barrier would have been an impossible barrier to breach without AVP. It opened our hearts to them and their hearts to us—the understanding arose that we all have experienced violence in some form and that there is a transforming strength in each of us. In that awareness we were unified, allowing cultural and language differences to fade into insignificance for the moment.

Alyn launched an active campaign to learn as much Kirundi [the language of Burundi] as possible and her infectious enthusiasm spread to the rest of us. We stumbled through greetings of *Amakuru* and *Murakomeye* and received squeals of delight from the kids when she greeted them with *Ndakubona* [I see you] as they trailed behind us, our constant companions for the month.

Our days at the worksite were *buhoro, buhoro* {slowly, slowly}, carrying bricks to the masons and apprentices. Our work team members, Georgette, Moise, Victor, Wilson, Jean-Paul, Jean-Marie, Peter and so many more, would shout words of encouragement, marveling that *Wazungu* [that's us – outsiders] actually can do physical labor. The Kirundi lessons continued at the worksite and we laughed at ourselves as we stumbled through pronunciations and made inside jokes from our AVP experience.

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# Kenya



## Friendships

By Barbara Reynolds

The hardest part about being home with my loving family is that I miss the friends I made in Kenya. I've been going over in my mind the AVP workshop I participated in before the workcamp and the Kenyans I met there. I find myself missing those participants who did not go on to the workcamp. There was Simon, the Pastor of Ikonyero Friends which housed the AVP workshop. He always had a big smile and was very friendly. Sweet Serena (each of us had given ourselves an adjective before our name for use during the AVP workshop)—“sweet” seemed really appropriate because Serena did not speak English as did all the other Kenyans. Serena was quiet, of course, and I would have liked to have gotten to know her better. Judith and I enjoyed each other's company. We would hold hands (socially appropriate in Kenya). The last day of the workshop, just before the van arrived to take the Americans to our local homes, Judith escorted me through the village to her home. There she showed me around from building to building introducing me to her husband, children and in-laws. Her father-in-law was blind. Judith casually mentioned that I might stay over night with her and her family sometime; that never happened. Maybe I can visit them during my next workcamp.

Then there were the Kenyan and Rwandan volunteers who worked with us at the workcamp—we sweated together, had backaches together and laughed together! We were all working hard together and we all wanted to be there. There was John-Paul, a Rwandan Friends Pastor, who spoke English with a very different accent than I had ever heard before; certainly not British. I think he spoke that way because of the French he learned in Rwanda. John-Paul is happily married with four children. Two of his children came down with their first episode of malaria while John-Paul was working with us. I worried about them with him. He called his wife on the cell phone to check on them. He

is usually, in recent years, living away from his family as he attends seminary in Uganda. Boaz looked like Harry Belafonte and I told him so! Boaz joked with us and said, “You Americans eat old food that has been frozen. We eat fresh chicken that was slaughtered just thirty minutes before!” Geoffrey always had a big smile. Helima was twenty years old and is the last child still living at home. Helima was a quiet, shy person. Yet, she and I had many conversations. I miss her the most.

I felt very accepted as an equal by the Africans. When they were eating sugar cane during a break at the workcamp, I was included with the local workcampers. Boaz called me over to join them. I never did learn the technique of using my teeth to peel the sugar cane! Helima would peel it for me. I had so much fun with my new friends and I miss them so much!



Building the walls at the AVP Peace Center in western Kenya

## An Appealing Target

By Joy Zarembka

Unbeknownst to me at the time, the Alternative to Violence Project (AVP) was a timely and fitting way to kickoff our Kenyan workcamp. Nancy, a Quaker from Acton (MA) has been a AVP trainer for 12 years, doing phenomenal work with prisoners in Boston. She and five other newly-trained Kenyan AVP trainers led us in exercises on “Transforming Power” and entertained us with “Light and Lively” that left our group positively giddy. The AVP workshop allowed for a genuine and trusting atmosphere to form amongst the international and local AGLI workcamp team members (see “Friendships” by Barbara Reynolds above). Yet, at the time, I did not realize I would be using the concept of “Transforming Power” so readily in Kenya.

During our second weekend in Kakamega, some of us from the international team – Amanda, Paurvi, Grace, and I – decided to visit the Saturday market in town. We had already recognized that we had to pace ourselves in a place as small as Kakamega or we would soon deplete all possible new town activities. And, since our suitcases were packed to the brim with all our essential necessities, the “shopping spree” soon turned into my singular obsession to buy a popular hat that was worn by many of the Kakamega residents. After hours of looking at second-hand clothes, shoes and bags mixed with an array of plastic cooking items and electronics, we left the market, snapping parting pictures as we exited. Grace had found a perfect purse to take to the workcamp though I remained hatless. Undeterred, we headed back and decided to check out the traditional stores on the way home, taking photographs along the way. We passed new sights – butcheries with samples of meat on the counter, older women on the sidewalk selling cups of beans and small fruits, thick foam pads dressed up in delightful patterns and colors and passed off as mattresses.

At one point, we all pulled over for a rest and I used the payphone to get in touch with my uncle who lives in another part of Kenya. As I spoke on the phone, a man began yelling at Grace for taking a picture of him. At first, Grace, who is a young Kenyan woman studying in the United States, calmly explained that she had taken a picture of the butchery, not of him. However,



Never too young to help

he insisted that he was standing near the butchery at the time and, therefore, the picture was of him. I got off the phone to join the conversation and immediately started thinking about the tenets of “Transforming Power.” Transforming Power is the basis of AVP – the power of truth and power within. This must become active and a practical way of life if violence is to be overcome. Even though I naturally had a bias towards Grace’s side of the story, I wanted to hear each person’s version of their “truth” and hear what both individuals had to say. Grace, who is from Nairobi, Kenya but lives in New Jersey, explained why and how the picture was not of him. The older man from Kakamega insisted that it was and further explained that it was illegal to take pictures of people without their permission. Grace and the man immediately employed an age-old and effective cultural custom by inviting an elder to hear each side of the story. Frequently in Kenya and other parts of Africa, disputes are settled by an older person or a council of elders who have proved to be fair and just within their community. The elder listened intently, displaying his Kenyan version of alternatives to violence.

As the elder listened and I faded into the background, a crowd began to gather and the voices grew louder. Grace apologized continuously while enforcing that he was unlikely to be in the picture. Soon, the conversation was no longer about whether the man’s arm may or may not have been in the picture but rather about Grace’s tone. The man seemed surprised that a young Kenyan woman would hold her ground and stand up

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As I passed by two men working on the lawn at a metal-smithing workshop, they pointed to me and said, “She is the President’s wife’s sister.” Augustin, one of our Rwandan friends, translated for me as I we passed on the red road; made an even darker red from the water that was poured over it that morning. The American world and Rwandan world came together in many interesting ways. On Thursday for the first lady of the U.S., the honored Rwandans put on a show of traditional dancing and school children preformed a skit about AIDS prevention. She shook the hand and talked to a child head of a family in a traditional looking hut that was constructed on school grounds the day before. Finally she shook the hands of the religious leaders and took a few pictures with the press.

All of this was explained to me ahead of time and then described to me later by a couple of friends that attended the event. I had no interactions with the official US delegation other than being awoken early in the morning to have my room thoroughly searched by armed guards and to go through a metal detector upon entering the school grounds. Instead Liz, a fellow workcamper), and I spent the afternoon with two other workcampers, one from Kenya and one from the Congo who were taken away from our housing, threatened with deportation and forbidden to go anywhere near the grounds around the time of Mrs. Bush’s visit. It was very hard to see people thrilled with her visit, the hoops others had to jump through for it to happen, and the inequalities that occurred as a result. As I put it to a friend, I respect Laura Bush as a person but not her position or power. Although it was amusing to be called her younger sister, it is an example of how I am perceived as an *Mzungu*, literally ‘stranger’, but used to refer to white people. It is very interesting to have celebrity status, having not even starred in a movie.

## AGLI Team Members

### Working Group, USA

Rosalie Dance (recording clerk), Michael Fallahay, Rachel Fretz (clerk), Tom Paxson (treasurer), Mumia Shimaka, Pakisa Tsimika, Cece Yocum

### US Staff

Dawn Rubbert (Program Manager), David Zarembka (Coordinator)

### Burundi

Adrien Niyongabo, Cassilde Ntamamiro

### Kenya

Getry Agizah, Beatrice Atieno, Malesi Kinaro, Isacc Matakaya, James Mujete, Nancy Shippen, Jane Wangusi

### Rwanda

Theoneste Bizimana, Pierre Damien Byumvuhore, Laura Shipler Chico, Josephine Mukangoga, Innocent Rwabuhiri

### Uganda

Hellen Kabuni, George Walumoli, Teresa Walumoli

### Workcamps

**Burundi**—Parker Bennett, Jerry Copeland, Alyn Euritt, David Mushiyi, Anna Sandidige

**Kenya**—Grace Ndicu, Jean Paul Nsekanabo, Amanda Peistrup, Barbara Reynolds, Paurvi Shippen-How, Joy Zarembka

**Rwanda**—Byaombe Ebasomba, Anna Crumley-Effinger, Gregory Lijoodi, Elizabeth Plunkett, Elliott Rector, Caroline Sarkis, Sally Smetzer

**Uganda**—Kaki Burns, Walt Burwell, Sheila Havard, Sarah Hennessy, Sam McElwain, Milenge Ndabuciwa, Nestor Ndayisenga, Karen Vaccaro, Barbara Wybar

inquired about treatment invariably they would be told that money for treatment was not available. This response would always result in the workcamp team member accompanying the person to the clinic for treatment and becoming a surrogate provider by paying the medical expenses. The cost for treatment usually ranged from \$3.00 to \$7.00 U.S. dollars. Compared to the long-term damage that malaria can do to the body, sharing a little of what we have with those that have so much less seemed very nominal.

The last Sunday of July gave our giving a very vivid presence for me in our involvement with the families and their children in Bududa. Every Sunday our host George Walumoli took us to a different Quaker meeting, each an outgrowth of the Evangelical Friends Church of Uganda. Members of the team were introduced as visitors and graciously welcomed by the meeting. On several occasions a member from our group planned and delivered a sermon for that days' worship. On the last Sunday a member presented a sermon from St Luke, Chapter 10 on "The Good Samaritan." As I stood with our group during the sermon, a young Ugandan, who often interprets for us, gave me a pocket size Bible, borrowed from George our host, and asked me to follow verses 30 and onward.

The last day of our stay I thought about that sermon of Sunday past and the many events of kindness extended to adults and children in the community by members of the team. Striking to me was the last three

encounters of medical support given to children: One child, a member of our orphanage, suddenly developed paralysis on the right side of her body. A member of the team who visited the family saw the child's need for medical attention. The family could not afford to take the child to the hospital for an evaluation. The team member arranged for the child and covered the cost for surgery and post medical care. The second child, a little girl about 3 years of age, was observed in front of her home on the side of the mountain with an open burn on her forearm. Medical treatment was not provided to the child because the parents could not afford the cost. Although the child was not a member of our program, a team member felt the urgency to take the child to the clinic to be treated and directed the parent to bring the child to the workcamp so she could be taken to the clinic. The team member covered the cost of treatment and medication. The third child, between three and four years of age, was walking with her sister on the road in the morning. A young man riding his bicycle lost control and ran into the little girl, who fell to the ground and received a gash to the side of her head. A member of our team witnessed this roadside accident and immediately rushed toward the child to provide assistance. She carried the child to the nearby clinic for treatment. The little girl's family could not afford the cost of treatment so the team member paid for that care.

The five weeks that I spent in Bududa, Uganda were truly a reminder of St Luke, Chapter 10; Verse 33, "... a certain Samaritan... had compassion on [them]."



Children of Hope orphans lined up for lunch

Continued from page 11: Nyarurambi Workcamp

Our most labor intensive days were when we carried trees—yes, really trees—on our head and shoulders for about a mile down one long hill across two small streams and up another very steep climb to the worksite. This trek was after we dragged them out of the woods down to the road. Again we astonished not only our fellow workcampers but also local residents who came out in crowds to watch our slow progression down the road. Gasps of astonishment and laughter came from the sidelines and broken English telegraphed out like newspaper headlines “*Wazungu* becomes Burundian!”

The work camp was an amazing experience for me and I realize that while the physical work we did was important, the most important work was becoming an accepted part of the community, to be seen not as an *Mzungu* but as Anna, or Parker, Alyn, Jerry or David—a valued friend. The physical and economic needs of Burundi are great and there is much that we *Wazungu* can do to alleviate some of the suffering that is here. But the greatest lesson I learned is that there is a quiet strength in each Burundian and they are brimming with ideas and ways of overcoming their circumstances—all they need is the equal support of our friendship. They don’t need our charity and especially not our pity—they need us to support them with love, prayers and financially just as we would any other friend in need.

To my many Burundian friends and *Wazungu* workcampers – *murakoze cane* [thank you very much], for all you have taught me and for the many gifts you gave me while I worked beside you. You stood with me as I worked through my fears, overcame stereotypes, explored Quaker spirituality and shared your life with me. You have taught me a great deal about what it means to be a Friend in every sense of the word.

## Reports to People at Home

By Parker Bennett

In case any of you out there may think that you are not fit for a workcamp like this, one of my American co-workers is a fascinating 79 year old man from Oregon, Jerry Copeland. Here at the workcamp, he is a steady worker with good stamina. There is no job which he feels unable to help with. But I can see that age is truly confronting him here, and yesterday he admitted that he was old (something he had never done before). But anyway he is here, and so should you be!

Each day after we return home from the worksite, we are greeted by a collection of kids who anxiously await our arrival. They are a vigilant group of youngsters who are outside of our house morning and night demanding things like “bon bon” [candy] or the privilege of seeing themselves in my video camera. I enjoy playing games with them, letting them touch my long blond hair, and teaching them English words as they teach me Kirundi.

Our workweek lasts Monday through Saturday usually going from 8 am to 2 pm. It is apparent to me that we are not here to provide free unskilled labor. While at the worksite, one of our friends, Jean-Paul, pointed to the top of the hill and said to us “Look, you see those people are refugees returning from Tanzania, they are happy that you are here.” Our presence as foreigners gives the sign that the country is peaceful enough to welcome outsiders, and the hope that these outsiders will bring in their wealth and help with the reconciliation and development process needed in a country recovering from war.

Alas, I have finally reconnected to the outside world. I had a great e-mail planned to write to you on Thursday but we drove the 10 miles to Gitega only to arrive at an internet cafe with no electrical power. It seems like the power we have in Kibimba is more regular than here in the “big” city. Everyday our power turns off for the middle of the day at a scheduled time making it easy to predict. So instead of writing e-mails, we sat sulking in front of the cafe but became happy after munching on delicious curry chickpea *samosas* bought from an Indian shopkeeper nearby.

On Monday we had a very interesting meeting with the Kibimba Peace Committee. A hundred women and about thirty men came to the school in Nyarurambi to see what our

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for her rights. At one point, he complained that, as a woman, she should not talk to him like that. At another point, he complained that, as a young person, she should not talk to him like that. A collision of cultures, ages, genders, and understandings continued to unfold. The man threatened to hit Grace for her disrespect. On various occasions, Grace, exercised some AVP tactics of her own, attempted to walk away from the situation but the man insisted that they draw a conclusion. Grace soon realized that the man wanted money for the supposed infraction, a bribe which is an unfortunately another common way to end disputes. As the crowd grew even thicker, Grace, out of sheer frustration, began thinking about how much money she had and how much money it would take to make this problem go away. As we all grew tired of this back and forth, I asked the man how he thought it should be resolved, trying to find a win-win in the situation. But because bribes are usually unspoken, known understandings, he was uncomfortable articulating his true intentions in front of such a large crowd. Grace took this opportunity to apologize once more and walk away, keeping her dignity and money intact. She fumed about the incident for a while before we were able to begin cracking jokes about the absurdity of it all, laughing about how we could not wait to see the actual photograph that had caused such a huff. That day, I realized the power of AVP and became even more excited about the AVP Peace Center we were building in Kakamega.

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The AVP Peace Center in Kenya is being built on what was formerly a sugarcane field. Some workers from the area had cleared the field and dug the foundation before we arrived but left some rather big obstacles, such as a huge tree trunk in what will someday be a classroom. There was another random tree trunk outside the structure which also doubled as a beehive. At some point, someone decided to burn the bees out right before our workday. This, of course, resulted in a large swarm of rather angry bees. Not “African Killer Bees!” as one American guessed but a tough crowd nonetheless.



Workcampers in Kenya

The day before that workday, I had decided to wash my hair with a new sweet-smelling shampoo, which nicely complemented the new fragrant soap I bought at the local shop. And, as luck would have it, I woke up with a rash on my chest and needed to apply lotion, an ointment I wholeheartedly avoid at all other times. So, of course, I was the most appealing target for the displaced bees. They swarmed near my braids and began landing on my shirt just opposite of my lotion. Amanda, always the prepared Girl Scout, had some insect repellent lotion. As I attempted to apply it to my hair and shirt, a bee had the audacity to land directly in the dollop in my hand, rendering the lotion completely inefficient. To make matters worse, the expensive insect repellent bracelet I purchased at Bed, Bath and Beyond seemed equally ineffective. The swarming was so overwhelming, I had to leave the worksite and head home for a shower, featuring non-descript soap followed by many squirts of “Off” bug spray. When I arrived back at the worksite, I was told that the anti-insect bracelet had become an internally-displaced camp for the refugee bees, where they resided until they were wiped out by a genocidal can of “Doom.” Most people escaped the day unscathed. I, luckily, was one of them. And, by the way, as luck would have it, I finally found the hat I wanted before I left Kenya.

## Mapping Africa and Uganda

By *Barbara Wybar*

Before leaving for Uganda this summer, upon hearing that we would be painting and plastering the interior of the school, I thought it would be fun to paint a map of Africa on one of the classroom walls. My friend Louise Barteau, who has been devoted to this cause for as long as I have, taught me how to do it. I took a large map of Africa and made a simple grid on it. I then measured the wall and made a similar grid on it, only bigger with the help of a fellow work-camper, Walt Burwell from my Germantown Meeting.

The African workmen were getting curious at this time and when we needed a plumb line and a level to make sure the lines were straight, they wanted to help and get involved.

In short order, the grid was up. It was late in the afternoon and we showed a couple of the African workmen how we could now proceed and put in the coastline of Africa by reproducing each square. It did not take long for them to get the hang of it. They hardly wanted to stop, but agreed that we would continue in the morning.

Next day there were many willing workers, all wanting to help and to check on our undertaking. However, there were two, Joseph and Moses, who were really hooked and tireless. Their work ethic, fascination in the project, interest in the process, and curiosity about the map made the effort so very rewarding. Each day we would start on something new—the coastlines, the country borders (all 54 African countries), the oceans and seas and islands, then names and capitals, including southern Europe, the Middle East, the Saudi peninsula, Iraq, and Iran—all the while mixing paints and painting. Sarah Hennessy oversaw the painting and she was equally affected by the energy that these Ugandan men were giving to the project. The atmosphere was electric. These men were on fire with a slow but constant burn.

Toward the end of the project, George Walumoli, our leader in Uganda, asked if I would put up a large map of Uganda on another wall, with all the natural features such as Lake Victoria and the Nile, as well as all the



Working on the map

districts. I told George that he need not ask me, he could just ask Joseph and Moses. He did. Joseph and Moses came to Hellen's house that evening just before dark wanting to borrow a map of Uganda. They started the next day with no trouble. I just felt such pride, as did Sarah and Walt. What could be more rewarding? As I flew home, the image that stuck in my mind was of Mighty Moses (a name we gave him in an Alternatives to Violence Workshop), in the squat position, on his toes, on a bench, working on the map with fixed concentration, and not even noticing that he had held that position for at least half an hour.



The finished map



AVP graduates in Bukavu, Congo

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a trauma clinic for women victimized by all types of violence including women traumatized by rape and then rejected by their husbands and families. The women's association has begun the hard work of collecting the rocks along Lake Tanganyika, transporting them to the site by boat, and on their backs.

The village of Abeka is preparing for the return of the more than 400 people who fled to Tanzania. In a recent meeting, which took place from August 8 - August 11, 2005 the UN High

Commission for Refugees, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania agreed to allow for the repatriation of 152,000 Congolese refugees in time to register to vote in next year's election. A large number of these refugees will be returning to the Fizi Region to abandoned villages like Abeka.

In the summer of 2006, AGLI will be sponsoring a workcamp in Abeka with this dedicated women's association to build their dream Trauma Clinic. Asumani goes on to explain, "The women have already obtained the land, collected the rocks, laid the foundation, completed the needs assessment, and identified potential clients. We ask the

people of AGLI to help us build this Trauma Center by providing the materials we need in order to comprehensively serve traumatized women."

Support for construction materials would allow them to complete the center, as well as initiate trauma healing, human rights, women's rights, and vocational training. You can be a part of this effort with AGLI by joining the workcamp or donating your money for this very worthy cause. See you in Abeka, 2006. For more information, email [dawn@aglionline.org](mailto:dawn@aglionline.org).

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group had been building. With babies on their backs, they emerged from the forest carrying logs needed for roofing. Afterwards, we gathered in the church for the customary introductions and speech giving. Some of their income generating projects were explained such as pig farming. They would like to have a sewing co-op but have no funds to buy the materials. We learned that most of the women were widows because of the war. They asked that we pray for them and that we Americans ask our friends back home to pray for them. So please hold the Kibimba Peace Committee in the Light. After the talking, the women began singing and dancing so we joined in and danced together in the dark and dusty church room to the beat of their clapping hands and the high pitched sounds of their voices.

As the work on the school was nearing completion, the pastor of the Friends Church, Josias, asked the group to teach English for two hours each evening. Alyn and our friend from Uganda, David, teach a beginners class of at

most 72 students ranging in age from 14-63. Anna and I teach the advanced English class of around 20 students, aged 18-50. Although we knew many people in the village before because of our introduction in the AVP workshop, this opportunity to teach English has opened the door for us to meet many more people. For my class, we begin with vocabulary words such as "sentimental, convince, entitled, intrusive, connotation and denotation", then we move on to a discussion of such things as "an average day, the differences between Burundian and American families, the Civil War and African Americans afterwards, and what Silent Friends believe and practice." Many of our students have studied English for five years so as long as I speak slowly, their comprehension is very high. We finish the class with American slang such as "hang on," "What's up?," "That hit the spot," "That's cool," and "Yo." Our students are very intelligent and excited to practice their English language. Learning English in Burundi is like having a rare job skill which could possibly land them high paying employment with an NGO.

## **Bringing Peace and Healing to Abeka** **By Mary Kay Jou**

Abeka is a tiny Bemba village nestled in the lush mountains and forests of the Fizi Region of the eastern Congo on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, a beautiful serene village lying amidst the amazing Congolese landscape. Once a bustling village of 500 people, Abeka now is mostly abandoned with only about 100 people remain. The rest fled as refugees to Tanzania where they still sit awaiting the chance to return home.

During the Congo wars of 1996 and 1998, many massacres took place in this region. Along the road to Abeka, Mkoko Boseka, General Secretary of Congo Yearly Meeting, pointed out two villages, Makabola and Katabota, which had been ravaged in 2002: More than 500 people had been killed in each village. The people were either cut to pieces or burned in their homes. This region is also well known for its child soldiers. As we got closer to Abeka, we could see the age of the soldiers manning the checkpoints grow drastically younger.

Since 1994 systematic rape has ruined the lives of many families. As Asumani Wa Ndanga, President of the Evangelical Friends Women's Association in Abeka explained, "The two wars devastated us through humiliating acts, rape, and other forms of violence perpetrated against women here in our village."

We spent the night in Abeka at the hospital which had been destroyed. In 1996, the soldiers came, raped

the women, killed about 50 people, mostly children, destroyed homes and fields, the hospital and the women's association. The soldiers took everything: the pharmacy and hospital supplies, the ceilings, the 12 sewing machines, etc. They left behind a group of extremely traumatized people. Mkoko and I brought a small donation of medicine and medical supplies—they need so much more.

We were shown the former home of an American Quaker family who had lived in Abeka from 1990 to 1993. They left hurriedly after being attacked and robbed by bandits. There is a memorial in their honor, even though they are still alive and living peacefully in the United States. There are no memorials for the millions of Congolese who died during the two wars.

As we were standing there, Pierre Damien, an AVP facilitator from Rwanda, found an undetonated bomb. There it was, about three feet long, in plain view, right next to the house. None of us could believe it. "The weapon they use to kill an elephant is the size of a syringe. And here, just look at what they use to kill human beings," he exclaimed with horror. There could be more bombs like this lying in the outskirts of Abeka.

The people of Abeka have high hopes and big dreams. Asumani goes on to explain that "rape, violence and inhumane acts have left the women of Abeka in a state of total trauma." This is why the Evangelical Friends Women's Association in Abeka has proposed opening

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